



People leaving aged care

People leave aged care services for a number of reasons, including moving to another service for the same or a different program type. When a person leaves an aged care service it is referred to here as an 'exit' (excluding short periods of leave, such as for family visits or hospital stays).

For exits that took place in 2019–20, over 68,000 were for permanent residential care, and over 33,000 were for transition care. The largest proportion of exits during this time was for respite residential care (nearly 83,000), reflecting that people often use this temporary service for short periods of time and on multiple occasions.

Reasons for leaving aged care

People can leave aged care services for varying reasons. Some people have death recorded as the reason for leaving, while others may have moved to another care service or have returned to living in the community. The reasons for leaving aged care services are likely to differ among care types.

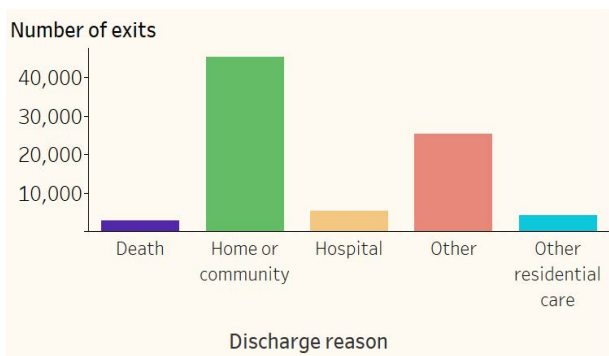


Figure 1: Number of exits from respite residential care by discharge reason, 2019–20

In 2019–20, most exits for permanent residential care were due to death (84% of exits), while most for home care were due to entering residential care (55% of exits). For respite residential care (Figure 1) and transition care, most exits were due to returning to community-based living (55% and 52% of exits, respectively).

People leaving aged care over time

There have been changes in the number of exits and typical length of stay for different care types over the last 10 years (Figure 2). Trends over the decade from 2010–11 to 2019–20 indicate that the number of exits increased for most care types, with the largest increase in exits for home care (50% increase), followed by transition care (40% increase) and respite residential care (35% increase). The number of exits for permanent residential care stayed mostly constant across this period.

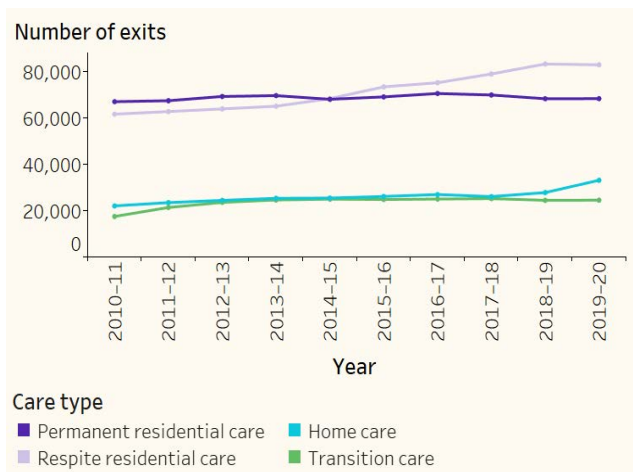


Figure 2: Number of exits by care type, 2010–11 to 2019–20

Length of stay in aged care

The time that a person spends using an aged care service in a single episode is described as "length of stay", regardless of whether they used community or residential care. Length of stay is described using the median values—the number found in the middle of a distribution of values (half of people have a length of stay longer than the median, and half of people have a length of stay shorter than the median).

For exits that took place in 2019–20, the median length of stay for permanent residential care was nearly 6 months longer than for home care (Figure 3). The median length of stay for women was longer than for men for all care types—over 1 month longer for permanent residential care and nearly 4 months longer for home care. However, for both men and women, the median length of stay in home care and permanent residential care generally increased with age at exit.

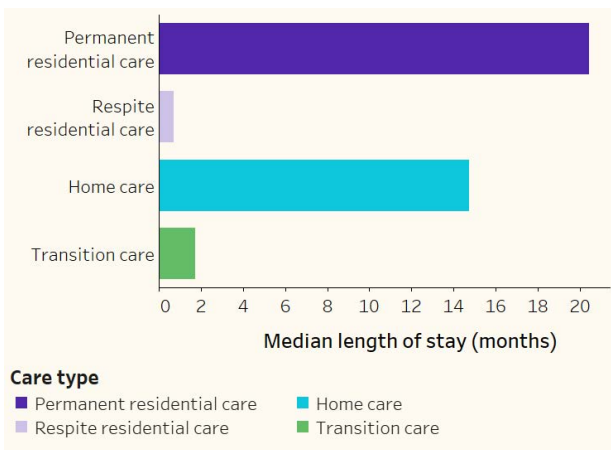


Figure 3: Median length of stay (months) by care type, 2019–20

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COVID-19 and people leaving aged care

Australia has faced significant challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 illness can be more serious for people who have pre-existing health conditions, including older Australians.

The number of people leaving aged care services is likely to have been impacted by COVID-19. In some cases, people temporarily leaving permanent residential aged care for community living with extra support provided may have been recorded as exits. In addition, approximately two-thirds of COVID-19-related deaths in Australia by May 2021 have occurred in people living in residential aged care facilities.

For further information related to older Australians and COVID-19, including access to advice and support resources, see the Australian Government's My Aged Care website. For more information regarding COVID-19 outbreaks in Australian residential aged care facilities, see the latest national snapshot.

Where can I find out more?

GEN Topic: People leaving aged care

<<https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/Topics/People-leaving-aged-care/>>

My Aged Care

Information for older Australians on Coronavirus (COVID-19). <<https://www.myagedcare.gov.au/news-and-updates/information-older-australians-coronavirus-covid-19/>>

National Snapshot - Australian Government Department of Health

<<https://www.health.gov.au/resources/collections/covid-19-outbreaks-in-australian-residential-aged-care-facilities/>>

Report on the operation of the Aged Care Act 1997:

<<https://www.gen-agedcaredata.gov.au/Resources/Reports-and-publications/2020/November/2019%E2%80%9320-Report-on-the-Operation-of-the-Aged-Care-A>>

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Information and data on aged care in Australia

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